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HOUSEKEEPERS' CHAT

Friday, May 20, 1932

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Subject: "Jelly From Early Summer Fruits." Information from the Bureau of Home Economics, U.S.D.A.

Publication available: "Canning Fruits and Vegetables at Home," Farmers' Bulletin 1471.

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In a few days now the early summer berry crop will be laid on the altar of American housewifery.

These early summer fruits yield up the ambrosial fluids that are the basis of delectable jellies to grace our winter tables.

So you think my language is getting just a little bit high-flown, do you?

Well, perhaps it is. But I ask you to listen to some really choice language about jelly. I am going to share with you part of a definition of jelly that was published nearly twenty years ago in a bulletin of the University of Illinois:

"Ideal fruit jelly is a beautifully colored, transparent, palatable product obtained by so treating fruit juice that the resulting mass will quiver, not flow, when removed from its mold; a product with texture so tender that it cuts easily with a spoon, and yet so firm that the angles thus produced retain their shape; a clear product that is neither sirupy, gummy, sticky, nor tough -- this is that delicious, appetizing substance, a good fruit jelly."

Now I ask you, isn't that a choice description? I thought that nothing could be added to it, but yet when I sent it to Mrs. Fanny Walker Yeatman, the recipe lady in the Bureau of Home Economics, she deposed and said that one thing was lacking. "Perfect jelly," averred the Recipe Lady, "must have not only sparkling clearness and quivering tenderness of texture, but also the delightful fresh fruit flavor by which it is identified."

And of course the Recipe Lady is right. Most of us treasure our favorite jelly for its flavor.

Which makes apropos this fine May morning the answers I got from the Recipe Lady to some of the questions that you ask every year about how to make the ideal jelly. One question that many of you beginners in jelly-making very sensibly ask is, "How ripe must the fruit be for best results in jelly-making?"

I'll give you Mrs. Yeatman's answer.

Mrs. Yeatman does just a little bit of dodging in her answer, for she tells us that the fruit used for jelly must be neither too ripe nor too green. "I find," she says, "that a mixture of about equal parts of underripe and of ripe fruit is ideal. The underripe fruit gives the best texture to the jelly, and the ripe fruit the best flavor. There must be pectin and acid in fruit to make good jelly, and the juice must be carefully extracted, the method depending upon the fruit that is used."

Now that leads up to the second question for today, "Please give me a method of extracting juice for jelly making from the early summer fruits." The answer:

"The first fruits of the season for jelly are blackberries, black raspberries, red raspberries, and currants. You can extract juice from the berries without adding water. But in the Home Economics laboratories we often use from a fourth to a half cup of water to the pound of fruit in extracting the juice from blackberries, black raspberries and currants. Their flavor is so rich that the juice can stand a little diluting. These fruits cook very quickly. We plan to cook them from three to ten minutes, depending upon the condition of the fruit."

Our third question now, "What is the best way to strain juice for jelly?" The answer:

"We have found that canton flannel jelly bags are best. We make them with the fuzzy side of the material in. A double thickness of good quality cheese cloth is also good. Suspend the jelly bag from a wire rack or a wooden support. When the flow of juice stops press the bag lightly with the flat sides of two knives to start it again."

Our fourth question on jelly making: "How much fruit can you cook at one time?"

"Up to six or eight pounds," answers the Recipe Lady. "And," she adds, "if I use as much as 8 pounds in one lot, I divide the juice in half and work up each part separately. As a rule, a pound of fruit yields about a cup of juice, and I work with not more than six and preferably about four cups of juice at once, using a large flat-bottomed kettle for rapid boiling. I find that you get better jelly from working with fairly small amounts of juice. The reason is that the evaporation of moisture is quicker, so the jelly retains the natural color and flavor of the fruit. I also find that it really takes less time in the long run to work with fairly small amounts of juice."

The fifth question, "How much sugar do you put in with the juice, and how do you cook it?"

"The amount of sugar is a very important point. Too little sugar gives a tough unpalatable jelly, while too much makes a syrupy, runny jelly. To one cup of carefully extracted juice, I use from 3/4 to 1 cup of sugar. The mixture of juice and sugar should be cooked down rapidly until it is so thick that it makes very heavy drops that run together before they fall from the side of a spoon. This blending of heavy drops is called sheeting off, and that is the

best test I know for the proper concentration of the jelly. The finished jelly is poured out into low sterilized hot jelly glasses. Take care to pour the jelly into the middle of the glass so that no drops stick to the sides above the level of the jelly. Then when the jelly has set, the hot paraffin that is poured on can make a tight seal. To insure a high, close-fitting seal, the glass is rotated while the layer of paraffin is still liquid. Jelly like all other home preserved products should be labeled with name and date, and then stored in a cool, dry place."

Finally, we submit to the Recipe Lady this question: "How do you make jelly from strawberries and from cherries?" And she answers:

"Strawberries and cherries require treatment rather different from the treatment you give the other berries and currants. As a rule they do not contain sufficient pectin to make jelly of a good standard. So you have to add some pectin extract in making strawberry and cherry jelly. That is, you usually have to add the pectin extract. But some strawberries do contain sufficient pectin and will jell perfectly if you add one tablespoon of lemon juice to each cup of strawberry juice."

I've had two inquiries about preparing fish steak in little rolls and baking. Today is just the time to answer these inquiries, for the Menu Specialist has planned a dinner with baked fish steak as the main dish. I'll read the menu and then tell you how to fix the fish.

All right. The menu for a spring fish dinner. Baked fish steak garnished with parsley and lemon slices; Creamed new potatoes; New asparagus, buttered; Crusty muffins; Tomato and lettuce salad; and, for dessert, Baked or broiled canned peaches.

That's the menu. Now, are you ready for the recipe for baked fish steak?

Seven ingredients. Here they are:

2 pounds of cod or halibut steak	1/4 cup of melted butter
2 tablespoons of lemon juice	1 teaspoon of minced onion
1/2 teaspoon of salt	Flour, and
1/4 cup of finely chopped parsley	

I'll go over that list again while you check to see if you have everything. (Repeat.)

Wipe the fish, remove any bones and cut it into pieces the right size for serving. To the melted fat add the lemon juice, minced onion and salt. Dip each piece of fish in this mixture. Then roll up the piece and fasten it with a tooth pick. Put the fish rolls in a greased, shallow baking dish, sprinkle with flour and pour the rest of the fat over the fish. Bake in a moderate oven (350 degrees F.) for about 25 minutes. If not sufficiently browned by that time, put the fish under the flame of the broiling oven. Sprinkle the chopped parsley over the dish and serve from the baking dish.

Monday: "More Economy News."

